

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 LONDON 18773 01 OF 02 151856Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----001466 151907Z /46

O R 151733Z NOV 77  
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0368  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
USMISSION USNATO  
USDEL MBFR VIENNA

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 18773

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1  
TAGS: PARM UK  
SUBJECT: DECISION ON ERW

REF: USNATO 10734

1. USNATO HAS POINTED OUT THAT THE ALLIES CONTINUE TO BE UNCERTAIN ABOUT U.S. HANDLING OF THE ERW ISSUE. MOST SEEMINGLY CANNOT SCREW THEIR COURAGE TO THE STICKING POINT WITHOUT A STRONG U.S. LEAD. A FEW MAY EVEN FEAR THAT WASHINGTON WILL WATCH THEM SLOWLY WALK OUT ON A LONG LIMB AS THEY RESIST THEIR DOMESTIC CRITICS OF THE WEAPON, AND THEN SUDDENLY SAW IT OFF BY DECIDING NOT TO DEPLOY. AS USNATO OBSERVES, SURPRISES OR CONSULTATION OF THE ONE-DAY VARIETY ON THIS EMOTIVE ISSUE WOULD SERIOUSLY BRUISE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS.

2. AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL, THE UK HAS CAREFULLY HEDGED ITS BETS WHILE IT TRIES TO DIVINE WHICH WAY THE U.S. WILL JUMP. AT THE VERY LEAST, IT TOO CERTAINLY HAS NO WISH TO BE EMBARRASSED HOWEVER THE DECISION GOES; AT  
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HOME, ESPECIALLY WITHIN THE LABOR PARTY, OR ABROAD. A CONSIDERABLE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN WAGED AGAINST ERW BY CONSTITUENCY LABOR PARTIES, AND NO. 10 RECEIVES SEVERAL PETITIONS A WEEK ARGUING AGAINST DEPLOYMENT. NONETHELESS, WE BELIEVE THE PM CAN HANDLE HIS LEFTIES IF THE ALLIANCE DECIDES TO GO AHEAD.

3. CALLAGHAN ALSO OF COURSE IS GUIDED BY WHICH WAY HE THINKS THE WIND IS BLOWING IN BONN. AND HE MUST CONCLUDE THAT AT BEST IT IS AN EQUIVOCAL BREEZE, BOTH THERE AND ELSEWHERE ON THE CONTINENT. IN GENERAL IT DOES SEEM TO US SAFE TO SAY THAT NO NATO GOVERNMENT IS EXACTLY CAMPAIGNING FOR ERW. ON THE ONE HAND THE EUROPEANS WORRY ABOUT THE POLITICAL PRICE THEY WOULD HAVE TO PAY TO THEIR DOMESTIC CRITICS AND AN AMBIVALENT PUBLIC OPINION ON THIS MATTER. ON THE OTHER, THEY WORRY BOTH ABOUT THE MILITARY BALANCE AND ESPECIALLY THE TANK DISPARITY IN CENTRAL EUROPE AND ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF ROUSING THE WRATH OF THE AMERICANS. THUS, THEY DITHER.

4. AT THIS DISTANCE FROM THE INTENSE DISCUSSION WHICH MUST BE GOING ON IN WASHINGTON CONCERNING THIS ISSUE, WE CAN'T SEE ANY EASY WAY OUT. ALTHOUGH WE BELIEVE HMG FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS AND THRESHOLD ARGUMENTS WOULD SUPPORT, PERHAPS EVEN PREFER, A U.S. AND THEREFORE ALLIANCE DECISION NOT TO DEPLOY, WE ALSO THINK IT WOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE EFFECT SUCH A CHOICE MIGHT HAVE ON THE PRESIDENT'S ABILITY TO GUIDE ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENTS THROUGH THE SENATE. MOREOVER, THERE WOULD CERTAINLY BE QUEASINESS AT THE OFFICIAL LEVEL AND AMONG THE TORIES HERE ABOUT U.S. DEDICATION TO MAINTAINING MILITARY STABILITY IN EUROPE IF THE  
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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----002904 152121Z /61

O R 151733Z NOV 77  
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0369  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY PARIS  
USMISSION USNATO  
USDEL MBFR VIENNA

S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 18773

EXDIS

ADMINISTRATION PRACTICES UNILATERAL SELF-DENIAL IN  
THIS INSTANCE.

5. ALL OF THE ABOVE SUGGESTS TO US THE ATTRACTIVENESS  
OF TYING ERW IN SOME WAY TO MBFR, POSSIBLY TO REDUC-  
TIONS IN SOVIET ARMOR. WE ACCEPT THAT THIS WOULD BE A  
FINESSE AND NOT A SOLUTION TO THE ERW PROBLEM, AND THAT  
IT IS HARDLY A NEAT WAY OUT. BUT FROM HERE SUCH A  
LINKAGE WOULD HAVE SEVERAL ADVANTAGES. IT WOULD MAKE  
CLEAR TO EUROPEAN PUBLICS AND PARLIAMENTS THAT WHAT WE  
ARE TALKING ABOUT IS AN ANTI-TANK WEAPON DEVELOPED TO  
MEET A DESTABILIZING TANK THREAT. FURTHER, IF NATO  
AGREES TO PRODUCE AND DEPLOY THE WEAPON UNLESS THE  
SOVIETS MADE SOME MOVE--TO BE DEFINED BY THE ALLIANCE--  
IN MBFR, THE EUROPEANS WOULD HAVE A STRENGTHENED ARGU-  
MENT TO MAKE DOMESTICALLY. AND IN THAT INSTANCE, THEY  
WOULD HAVE TO FIGHT ONLY ONE MAJOR ENGAGEMENT WITH THE  
OPPONENTS, AND NOT FACE THE DEBILITATING PROSPECT OF  
INDEFINITE DEFERRAL. BRIEFLY, THE ALLIES COULD  
SUBMIT THAT THE WEST IS NOT MINDLESSLY ESCALATING THE  
ARMS RACE IN EUROPE, THAT IT IS GIVING THE OTHER SIDE

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AN OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN LOWERING OF TENSIONS  
THROUGH MUTUAL REPEAT MUTUAL RESTRAINT AND THAT IF THE  
EAST IS NOT INTERESTED, THE FAULT LIES WITH IT AND NOT  
WITH US. AND FINALLY, SUCH AN OFFER WOULD, WE BELIEVE,  
DISARM THE CRITICS IN EUROPE WHO WOULD SEE A DECISION  
NOT TO DEPLOY AS A SIGN THAT AMERICA IS NOT UP TO THE  
TEST ON THIS SIDE OF THE ATLANTIC.

6. A FINAL WORD: NONE OF THE ABOVE MAY BE AS IMPORTANT  
AS THE IMPACT OF THIS DECISION ON SCHMIDT. AS NOTED,  
THIS IS A PRIMARY BRITISH CONCERN AND WE SHARE IT.  
SOME WE HAVE TALKED TO FEAR THAT INCLUSION OF ERW IN  
MBFR MIGHT DIVIDE THE GOVERNING COALITION IN BONN AND  
THUS JEOPARDIZE SCHMIDT'S TENURE. IF SUCH FEARS ARE  
FELT TO BE VALID THEY MAY BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN OTHER  
FACTORS CITED, A POINT ON WHICH EMBASSY BONN MAY  
WANT TO COMMENT.

BREWSTER

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## Message Attributes

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**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** DECISION ON ERW  
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**Type:** TE  
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